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NSC 11-25-81 letter

By ics

NARS, Date 2-9-82

Memorandum of Conversation

Bonn Germany
August 19, 1961
12:40 P.M.
Palais Schaumburg

Participants

American

The Vice President
Secretary Connally
General Gay
Ambassador Bohlen
Ambassador Dowling
Mr. Cash

German

Chancellor Adenauer
Foreign Minister von Brentano
State Secretary Globke
Ambassador von Braun
Ambassador von Emdorf
Ambassador Duckwitz
Mr. Weber (Interpreter)

The Chancellor began the discussion by saying how grateful he was to have the Vice President and his party in Bonn. He continued by saying that he felt strongly that recent reproaches of the U. S. Administration and especially President Kennedy were completely unjustified. He added that the reproaches were directed against the U.S., U.K., and France, but that they began in the United States. He quoted a New York Herald Tribune article saying that the greatest handicap the Western Allies have is their inability to agree among themselves. The more we are told, the article continued, about the unity of the West, the more disunity grows.

The Chancellor said that the unrest among the German people caused by the shock of the recent acts of the Ulbricht regime had now diminished. The initial impact had been heightened by the fact that the people had not been prepared for these developments. It was vacation time, during which they did not pay much attention to what was in the papers, and then they have been taken by surprise.

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He said that on the 13th of August he had addressed a crowd of 7,000 in Essen and outlined for them a realistic picture of the world situation. It was a CDU rally, but some SPD supporters were present and heckled him at the start. He had told the crowd that we live in a period of nuclear weapons and had explained the effects such weapons can produce. He had said that we were at the start of a period of very important and serious negotiations, which must take place, but only after military preparations, as the Russians respect only military strength.

He had told the crowd what gratitude Germans owe the U. S. He had added that it was unjust to express doubt that the U. S. would honor its pledges. Instead, the Germans must stand firmly beside the U. S.

The crowd had understood and had applauded him as seldom before.

The Chancellor assured the Vice President that in the month remaining in the current election campaign his party would take the line that the West must negotiate seriously with Khrushchev because the latter does not want a war in which, as he knows, there would be no victors. Khrushchev wants negotiations instead.

He said that the Federal Republic would not flinch in its loyalty to the Atlantic Treaty or in its loyalty to the U. S. He asked the Vice President not to form any firm opinion until he had had a chance to see the present situation in Germany and Berlin for himself.

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Is facing a difficult situation such as that we face today, it is especially important to consider emotional and psychological factors, and it was, therefore, exceedingly helpful that President Kennedy had sent to Germany the Vice President and General Clay, who is still so well remembered.

The Chancellor said that the real situation in Germany was reflected in the warm, friendly, enthusiastic greeting the Vice President had received from the hundreds of people who had lined the route all along the long drive from Wahn airport into Bonn. He said he had noted only one critical sign held by an elderly spinster which read "Action, not words." He added with a smile that he had taken a second look at the spinster and decided that he wanted neither words, nor action, with her.

He said he had no doubt that the Vice President would receive in Berlin the same warm, cordial reception from all the people, and inasmuch as Berlin was much larger than Bonn, the welcome would seem even more overwhelming. He had made the same drive from Wahn to Bonn in 1959 with President Eisenhower when there was the same picture of happy people showing great joy, friendship, and real cordiality which was the result of the deep and warm respect they had for the United States.

The Vice President said he appreciated the reception he had received very much. The Chancellor's visit to the U. S. in April was still fresh in the Vice President's mind, and the warm reception given the Chancellor was evidence of high regard for his leadership as well as friendship for the German people.

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In hours of trial, he continued, all nations have some people who get excited and sometimes say and do things that are not wise. However, this is only the initial response, and it comes only from isolated groups and individuals who don't represent the majority.

It is important to realize, he added, that we are not going to solve these difficulties overnight. We must prepare for a series of actions like the recent Berlin developments, which are only an example of what we can expect.

The new U. S. Administration is only six months old, the Vice President continued, and it has had to face many new and old problems. The President has felt that he should call upon Congress and the people to prepare more diligently and effectively -- at great cost to the U. S. taxpayer -- to meet the vast U. S. responsibilities in all parts of the world. The response has been one of faith and encouragement. The President had recently requested the largest preparedness appropriation ever sought except in time of war, and Congress had given him even more than he had asked. There was, therefore, no lack of concern, or preparation, or action on the part of the U. S. Government or any lack of faith in its allies.

The Vice President said the President was very anxious to communicate to the Chancellor and the German people American concern over the unpleasant developments of the last few days. Since he was unable to leave the country at this time, he had asked the Vice President to do so. Knowing the confidence

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reposed in General Clay, the President had requested him to accompany the Vice President. It was felt that there should be no lack of faith when General Clay appeared, as it was well known that he would never advocate retreat.

The Vice President hoped the current visit to Germany would cheer the people and strengthen their morale as well as stimulate the U. S. and Federal Governments to march forward shoulder-to-shoulder. President Kennedy properly felt that this visit would say more than all the words that could be used or any response that could be made by letter, although the Vice President was carrying a letter to Mayor Brandt in response to one he wrote the President.

The President recognizes and appreciates the statesman-like approach the Chancellor takes to our mutual problems. He has great respect for his judgment.

The President sent the Vice President, the Secretary of the Navy, General Clay, and Ambassador Bohlen to make it clear that the U. S. was proceeding expeditiously with a comprehensive program of military and economic assistance to other nations of the world, and that the U. S. has accelerated the call to arms of both men and production and expanded its scientific and space efforts to the extent that the President has requested much more money than President Eisenhower -- or even President Kennedy -- had thought would be necessary. The U. S. has called up men, expanded production, increased its military assistance program, and concentrated on military preparation, all of which can properly be regarded as recognition of necessity for action. We

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want the German people to know what we are doing and to assure them that we are not unaware of developments in Germany and not unconcerned about them. The German people can be sure the U. S. will keep its pledges and honor its commitments, of which the Vice President knew the Chancellor had no doubt.

The U. S. program is supported unanimously by both parties.

The Chancellor said he greatly appreciated the support of the President and Congress.

Regarding the letter from Mayor Brandt, the Chancellor would not have sent such a letter containing some impossible and impractical proposals.

The Federal Government had quite naturally considered using international trade as a way to retaliate against the Communists in the recent actions they had taken in Berlin, but had decided against this because of the link between this trade and access to Berlin.

Certain moves were being made by West Germans such as the developing of an unofficial boycott of the Leipzig Fair. Also sport connections with the Soviet Zone are being severed. There are also the steps the Chancellor discussed with Secretary Rusk a week ago in Cadiz.

The Vice President then asked General Clay if he wished to say anything.

The latter said he appreciated the opportunity to return to Germany and see the Chancellor, who knew the General was fully committed to the continued freedom of West Berlin. The Vice President was one of the earliest and strongest

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supporters of this position. In addition, he knew of nothing on which the people of the United States agreed more than on the necessity for firmness on Berlin.

The General felt that we must not waste time on minor counter-measures or pinpricks which would not affect the main issue, on which we must keep our eyes. He was quite confident that the American people were wholly firm on Berlin, but that in addition, they expected negotiations and would not like the introduction of counter-irritants which might interfere with negotiations.

The Vice President then asked Ambassador Bohlen to speak.

The latter said the current feelings of the West Berliners were wholly understandable. The U. S. had considered various counter-measures and concluded that most of them would be counterproductive and would provide a pretext for a renewal of the Berlin blockade.

As the Chancellor knew, Ambassador Bohlen continued, the U. S. had announced that it was reinforcing its Berlin garrison by about 1,500 men. This was the kind of measure the U. S. thought should be taken.

One of the main purposes of the current visit was to give evidence of U. S. interest in West Berlin, and the conclusion concerning countermeasures does not indicate any weakening in our determination to defend the freedom of West Berlin, our presence in the city, and access thereto. We hope to convey this in Berlin.

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Ambassador Bohlen concluded by saying that the U. S. Government agrees with the Chancellor that, though disagreeable, current developments do not represent the real Berlin crisis. Our eyes must be kept on the main issue.

The Chancellor then concluded the meeting by saying that he agreed fully with all that had been said, and that the people of the Federal Republic would be oriented in this direction. This line would be followed in the remainder of the election campaign by the CDU/CSU, which would be successful. He had the previous day made a statement before the special session of the Bundestag, and this statement was in complete harmony with the U. S. position, which was also supported by the CDU/CSU.

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